

VISIT...

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BATMAN[®] 604



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MCDANIEL



SOMETIMES, TO MOVE
FORWARD, YOU HAVE TO
GO BACK TO THE
BEGINNING.

THERE ARE MANY BEGINNINGS
TO THE PLACE I HAVE ENDED
UP, BUT MOST OF THEM ARE
HERE...

...IN GOTHAM'S
EAST END.

THE PARTIALLY FORGOTTEN
SLUMS THAT BORDER
HISTORIC OLD GOTHAM...A
HUNDRED YEARS AGO,
THESE TENEMENTS
HOUSED IMMIGRANTS
FRESH OFF THE BOATS
AND FULL OF HOPE...

NOW THEY ARE
MOSTLY HOME TO
MISERY AND FEAR.

YEARS AGO, BEFORE
THE BAT FOUND ME
AND TOLD ME WHO
I WAS...

...I TRIED TO FIND
MYSELF ON THESE
STREETS.

WAS I BATMAN
THEN? OR JUST
BRUCE WAYNE IN
A DISGUISE,
TRYING TO BEGIN
A MISSION HE'D
WAITED ALL HIS
LIFE FOR?

THE MOVES, THOUGH
ROUGHER AND LESS
SURE, WERE SOME
OF THE SAME I
USE TODAY...

THE MOTIVE WAS THE
SAME ONE THAT
DRIVES ME STILL...



WAS THAT DAY-- THAT FAILURE--
WHAT BEGAN THE SPLIT? THE
NEED FOR ANOTHER FACE?



WAS THAT WHEN
BRUCE WAYNE
BECAME NOTHING
MORE THAN A
MASK?



WHATEVER THE TRUTH
OF IT... ONE THING
IS CERTAIN...



...THE REASON
I CHOSE THE EAST
END TO MAKE MY
START.

NE POWER in
ZORRO

BECAUSE EVERYTHING
BEGAN HERE...

...IN A SMALL LANE CONNECTING
OLD GOTHAM TO THE EAST END...

...A PLACE THAT CAME TO BE
KNOWN AS CRIME ALLEY.

Reasons

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MARK OF
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AND I CAME HERE TONIGHT
FOR THE SAME REASON I
DID ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...



...TO TRY TO FIND
SOMETHING I LOST
A LONG TIME AGO.







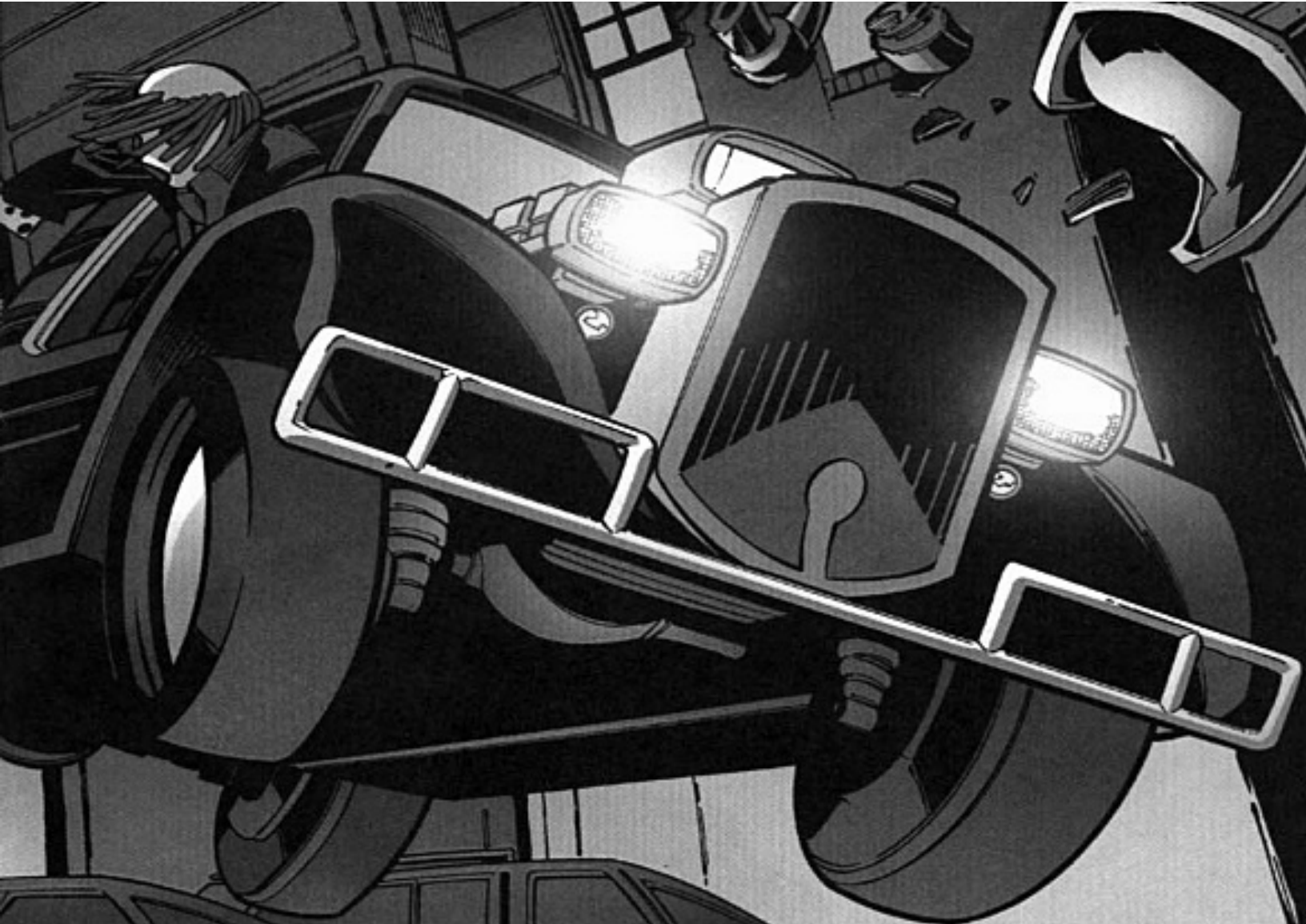
YOU'RE OKAY...
WE HAD A LITTLE
SCARE, BUT IT'S
ALL RIGHT...

...BA-BA-BATMAN...?

WHEEBOON!











FIRST TIME IN NEARLY
A YEAR THAT THE JOKER'S
OLD HENCHMEN HAVE
CRAWLED OUT OF THE
WOODWORK...

WITHOUT HIS GUIDANCE,
THEY CAN BE EVEN *MORE*
DANGEROUS SOMETIMES...
DIRECTIONLESS, FUELED
BY CHAOS...

ANYONE WHO FOLLOWS THAT
LUNATIC SHOULD BE LOCKED
AWAY IN ARKHAM ASYLUM FOR
THE REST OF THEIR NATURAL
LIVES, ANYWAY... BUT WHAT
COULD THEY BE AFTER IN THE
EAST END?

AND WHERE DID
THEY DISAPPEAR TO?



IT'S THE
SECOND
GARAGE ON
THE RIGHT.



YOU ARE
AFTER THE IDIOT
CLOWN ROSSE,
RIGHT?

YES, WHAT
ARE YOU DOING
HERE?



HEY, THIS IS MY
NEIGHBORHOOD,
REMEMBER?

WELL,
ANY IDEA WHAT
THEY'RE
DOING HERE,
THEN?



NO.
LET'S
FIND OUT,
SHALL
WE?





-- COURSE WE GOT HIM, JIMMY, WHY YOU THINK WE WERE COMIN' IN SO FAST?

I TOLD YOU, MORON...



... FROM NOW ON, YOU CALL ME PUNCH.

NOW LET'S SEE WHAT THIS WEASEL'S GOT TO SAY...



LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THE JOKER'S BOYS DECIDED TO GROW UP INTO HIS OWN LITTLE MONSTER... HOW'D YOU LIKE THAT?

I DON'T.

WHO'S THE VICTIM?



HEH, RIGHT. MORE LIKE A VICTIMIZER-- TONY "THE TURK" RULYANCHIK... A BIG-TIME OPERATOR IN THE EAST END NOWADAYS...



... I GUESS THE CLOWNS WANT TO MOVE IN ON HIS TERRITORY...



I DON'T
THINK YOU'RE
GETTING
ME, *TURK*...
THIS ISN'T
A DEBATE!

GO AHEAD AND
KILL ME, THEN...
S'WHAT MY BOSS'LL
DO ANYWAY IF I
SAY A WORD TO
YOU...

WHO
SAID
ANYTHING
ABOUT
KILLING?

LET'S GO.

YOU *KIDDING*?
TONY THE *TURK*
DESERVES TO
BE WALKING WITH
A LIMP...

THAT'S
NOT THE WAY
I WORK.

AW, MAN--
THE *FREAKIN'*
BAT!

SK
KA
SHH

RATATATATAT



LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GONNA HAFTA CUT THIS SHORT, PAL...

NOOO...



HEY-- NO FAIR...



ALL RIGHT, DAMN IT... THIS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH...



OUTTA THE WAY! OUTTA THE WAY!

BIAM KA-BAM

KEVLAR PROTECTS ME, BUT MY RIBS ARE CRACKING...





CAN BARELY BREATHE...
DAMN. THAT HURT.



WHAT DO
YOU WANNA
DO ABOUT
THIS JERK?



POLICE'RE ON
THEIR WAY BY NOW...
LET THEM DEAL
WITH HIM...

HEY!
HEY!





YOU
SURE YOU'RE
OKAY?

WE COULD
WAKE UP *LESLIE*
IF YOU NEED TO
BE LOOKED AT...
IT'S EARLY,
BUT--



I'LL BE *FINE*,
SELINA... I
JUST NEEDED
A FEW MINUTES
TO GET MY
BREATH BACK...



Y'KNOW, YOU
DIDN'T *HAVE*
TO LET HIM
SHOOT YOU
THAT MUCH...



IF I'D
DODGED HE
WOULD'VE HIT
RULYANGHIK...



I JUST DON'T
UNDERSTAND
YOU
SOMETIMES...



YOU STAND
THERE AND TAKE
POINT BLANK
SHOTS FOR
ONE OF THE
BIG SCUZZBALLS
IN GOTHAM...



I MEAN, I COULD UNDERSTAND IF HE WAS A *DECENT* HUMAN BEING, OR A *FRIEND*... I'D JUMP IN FRONT OF A BULLET FOR A FRIEND...

THAT'S *NOT* WHAT IT'S ABOUT...

WHAT *IS* IT ABOUT THEN, BOY SCOUT?

IT'S COMPLICATED.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE BIG PROTECTOR OF THE *INNOCENT*...

-- WHAT'S COMPLICATED ABOUT *THAT*?

EVERYTHING.

LIFE COMPLICATES EVERYTHING.

SO, Y'KNOW, YOU NEVER *DID* TELL ME WHAT YOU WERE DOING IN THE EAST END TONIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE...

THAT'S SORT OF COMPLICATED, TOO.

UH HUNH... LOOK, IF YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, YOU DON'T NEED TO MAKE UP *EXCUSES*...

A close-up, black and white illustration of Batman's face. He is looking down with a serious, intense expression. His cowl is visible, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of his face and the texture of his suit.

OKAY, YOU
CAUGHT ME...

A close-up, black and white illustration of Catwoman's face. She is wearing her signature goggles and has a confident, slightly mischievous smile. Her dark hair is visible, and the lighting is soft, emphasizing her features.

SOMEHOW,
I *DON'T* THINK
SO...

A large black and white illustration showing Batman and Catwoman on a rooftop. Batman is on the left, looking towards Catwoman. Catwoman is on the right, leaning forward with one arm extended. The background shows a city skyline with various buildings and a large, stylized building with a curved roof.

IT'S BEEN
FUN, BOY SCOUT...
LET'S DO THIS AGAIN
SOMETIME...

A black and white illustration of Batman standing on a rooftop. He is looking down, and his shadow is cast on the ground. In the background, there are city buildings and a sign that reads "MONARCH MARK OF ZORRO".

WHY DID I
COME HERE
TONIGHT?

I THOUGHT IT WAS
TO TRY TO FIGURE
THINGS OUT... TO GO
THROUGH IT ALL IN
MY HEAD FOR THE
MILLIONTH TIME...



I THOUGHT
THAT IN MANY
WAYS BRUCE
WAYNE DIED
ALONG WITH
HIS PARENTS...

AND THE MASK I'VE
SHOWN THE WORLD
ALL THESE YEARS IS
THE REMNANT OF
WHAT THAT CHILD
WAS BEFORE THAT
NIGHT.

BUT IT'S NOT TRUE.
MY CODES, THE
RULES I LIVE BY--
THESE IDEALS
COME FROM MY
FATHER... FROM
THOMAS WAYNE...

THAT'S WHY I
COULDN'T LET
EVEN A KILLER
LIKE TONY
RULYANCHIK
GET SHOT.

BECAUSE HE
WOULDN'T HAVE
EITHER. HE
BELIEVED IN THE
SANCTITY OF ALL
LIFE.



I'VE BEEN
SO BLIND...
ALL THIS
TIME.

I THOUGHT THE
REAL BRUCE
WAYNE WAS THAT
HAPPY CHILD OF
MEMORY...

BUT NOW THAT
EVERYTHING HAS
BEEN STRIPPED
AWAY FROM HIM,
I REALIZE THAT
MASK IS NOT
BRUCE... NOT
AT ALL.

I AM BRUCE WAYNE.

I ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.



TO BE CONTINUED



Batguys,
Wow, I never thought you could top "No Man's Land," but this storyline is really excellent, mainly because of your outstanding characterization of all the Bat people and their reactions to the crisis. So, who's the killer? I've decided that although the thought of a vengeful and slightly demented James Gordon is an intriguing possibility, right now my money is on...Batman. A slightly schizo Batman, that is. Increasingly uncomfortable with acting as a flaky playboy and frustrated because he can't be everywhere, Batman has decided that he could

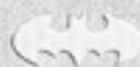
spend more time as the Dark Knight by eliminating his dual identity. As a fugitive, Bruce Wayne could not exist, only Batman. Why else would the World's Greatest Detective move Vesper's body? Where was he really when he ditched Sasha to rescue the jumper? Why else blow Robin's cover to Spoiler than to ruin his identity, too? Why else would a loner like him have gathered such a large family of Bat heroes? Why else would you make it so clear that Bruce Wayne is the mask, not Batman? Of course, this storyline has a precedent in the UNTOLD ORIGIN OF BATMAN, where a mysterious person was blowing up the Batcave and trying to ruin Batman's identity, and it turned

out to be Bruce Wayne all along.
Keep the fantastic work coming!!

MIKE DICK
VIA AOL

Bat Signals,
BATMAN #599 was another great installment of "Bruce Wayne: Murderer?". Ed Brubaker proves that he understands the Bat-characters more and more with every issue. He caught me by surprise, though. I figured Bruce would just take his beating to protect his secret. I guess you can only push the guy so far. What I'm wondering is: Where are all his JLA buddies? Shouldn't they be lining up to aid in the investigation? I know he isn't the most popular member, but I don't think they'd leave him out to dry, especially Superman. I just don't see Kal leaving Bruce on the vine like that. I'm sure you've got some wonderful trick up your sleeve, though. If not, you'll be hearing from me. I know you'll do well. Keep up the good work!

LT. JARROD "J-BONE"
ALBERICH, USAF
MAXWELL AFB, AL



Dear BATMAN,
BATMAN #600 was great! The cover of BATMAN #600 was a classic, not to mention the best BATMAN cover in the last 20 years. So many issues in BATMAN #600 were brought up I couldn't possibly comment on them all, but I will say this: Batman has isolated

himself from the Bat-Team now and has entered a new phase of his career and nothing is certain. I won't be missing upcoming issues for anything!

BRENDAN WALSH
CHICAGO, IL

I wanted to cry. How could Batman tell off Nightwing and the rest of the crew in #600? It was so good, I experienced a range of emotions. Bruce Wayne being a burden to Batman and Bruce being the mask, it was genius. The whole "Murderer" and "Fugitive" storyline has been great, but Brubaker gets top billing for this issue. Great job!

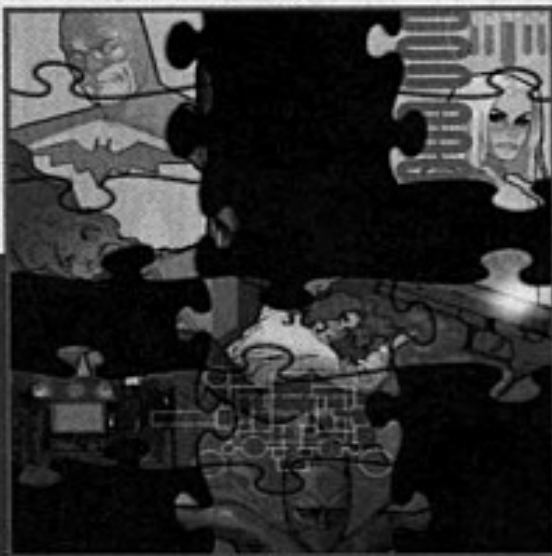
MITCHELL MCROY
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

So many letters came in on issue #600, we decided to split them between this and the next letter column. Lots of controversy: Batman giving up the Bruce Wayne persona... and the fight you thought you'd never see between Batman and Nightwing. And those backups! Oy! What a time to be a Batfan!

Your pal in the Batcave,
Michael Wright

NEXT ISSUE:

The conclusion of
"Bruce Wayne: Fugitive!"
By Brubaker, McDaniel and
Owens.



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KEYWORD: DC COMICS on AOL

This month's cover by Scott McDaniel, with colors by Patrick Martin.

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